

THE JUSTINIAN APOLOGETICAL TURN, AWAY FROM ORIGINAL PETRINE APOLOGETICS*

STUART NICOLSON

ABSTRACT

Christian apologetics is traceable back to Peter's call in 1Peter 3:15-16. To all faithful, he requested that they be prepared to respond in a Christian manner when another questioned or challenged the faith. This developed in the first century and beyond, until the new approach of Justin Martyr in the third quarter of the second century. Justin, following the apologia on Aristides' addressing of non-faithful as well as his legal and philosophical background, focused narrowly on a far more intellectual approach and content. This was within the far wider sphere of the general Petrine apologetics. However, with the exception of Irenaeus in the 180s, subsequent apologetics followed Justin's specific apologetics approach, with it becoming narrow in focus, intellectual thus elite, increasingly clerical, and not for ordinary faithful. It was this apologetics that developed over the centuries until the Second Vatican Council *ressourcement* calls to return to original Petrine apologetics for all the faithful.

Keywords

Original Apologetics; Petrine apologetics; Justinian turn; Second Vatican Council; Ressourcement

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Peter's scriptural call to apologetics is foundational. It has three elements, preparation, response, and a good Christian manner, and it was for all the faithful. This is supported by Paul and Jude in Scripture, and the preparation element was a significant focus for the earliest Christians, according to extant sources, albeit these cannot

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give a clear image of verbal dialogue taking place within and outwith the faithful. The Apostolic Fathers' generation developed from the Two Ways foundational preparation to a more pastoral apologetical content for the faithful, and in the second century this then developed into written apologias aimed at those outside the faith.

Justin Martyr later took the relatively new written apologia approach along with that of dialoguing with Jews and developed these in a far more lengthy and intellectual way, creating a niche type of apologetics: not for all but the well-educated few, yet clearly a specialist part of the wider Petrine model. However, subsequent extant sources show that apologetics retained an intellectual level that became distanced from ordinary faithful and, later in the Early Church, apologetics was generally the reserve of intellectuals, often clerics. The different apologetical approach of Justin was the beginning of a new way of doing apologetics as later developments show. This Justinian¹ turn in apologetics continued to be the norm through Mediaeval times and only in the last century did apologetics become more accessible to ordinary faithful, first in the English-speaking sphere and then in the apologetical calls and content in the Second Vatican Council's documents.

While the far more general 'The Field of Apologetics Today: Responding to the Calls of Scripture and the Second Vatican Council' shows how apologetics has recently suffered a 'crisis of identity',² the more focused 'Original Apologetics'³ explores more deeply how Scripture and the Council call for a more general apologetics. This paper seeks to distinguish the original intentions of what became known as apologetics from how it later developed, showing how a specific type of apologetics became normative in the Early Church through the Justinian turn. It then outlines how a return to the original intentions for apologetics, making it an integral part of the lives of all faithful, is part of Vatican II's *ressourcement* call.

¹ Not to be confused with the 6th century Emperor Justinian.

² Stuart Nicolson, 'The Field of Apologetics Today: Responding to the Calls of Scripture and the Second Vatican Council,' *Heythrop Journal* 59, no. 3 (May 2018): 410–423, here 410. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/heyj.12985>. DOI: 10.1111/heyj.12985.

³ Stuart Nicolson, 'Original Apologetics,' *Theology and Philosophy of Education* 2, no. 2 (December 2023): 4–12. <https://www.tape.academy/index.php/tape/article/view/33>. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10413418.

1. Establishing Petrine Apologetics

Possibly the first but certainly the clearest and most significant call to what can be considered original apologetics was made by Peter in 1 Peter 3:15–16. Taking the idea of *apologia*, the defence given in response to an accusation, *kategoria*, in Greek legal terms going back at least as far as Socrates, he Christianised it by setting it as integral to the Christian life. The addressees of the epistle (1Pt 1:1) were those in the Christian Diaspora of the 60s, namely here to those in present-day Turkey, who were clearly experiencing not only an unstable situation but also one that offered plenty hostility – by Jews who were increasingly rejecting them (cf. Paul’s many experiences), Greeks who were somewhat accepting but could turn away or demand a quid pro quo of accepting other deities, or possibly even by other Christians in young but established Churches who were developing in their own faith and may have felt challenged by other Christians bringing other Christian thinking. It was a very fluid time and the temptation was surely to withdraw from engagement, especially for Jewish converts who came from a ‘closed’ religion, one that did not engage with the ‘other’.

However, Peter was calling the faithful to engage. And surely this did not apply only to those in the named regions but really for all Christians. His call is not applicable to only that time and place. It was to all the faithful, not just deacons or Apostles, or to others in specific positions. The very fact that the Church later recognised the text’s canonicity and its catholic audience confirms the universal call of Peter in a certain way.

Peter’s call in 1Peter 3 is:

^{15b} Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence; ¹⁶ and keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are abused, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.⁴

⁴ All scriptural text in this paper is from the RSVCE Bible.

There are three discernible elements to the Petrine call:

- i) 'Always be prepared to make a defense',
- ii) 'make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you',
- iii) 'do it with gentleness and reverence'.

The first is for preparation, that is, to have learned sufficiently the content and thus understand what one will communicate. In the traditional Trivium educational system, it is the grammar. The second is to react by responding – to engage with the other who questions or challenges the faith – which presupposes sufficient preparation. The third is to do so in a Christian manner, thus being a good witness and a communicator with a manner consistent with the message.

Therefore, the Petrine call can be categorised as having the aspect of a universal call and the three elements of preparation, response, and Christian manner.

2. Confirmation in Scripture

While the Petrine call can be recognised, the question must be asked whether it was a singular thing, a matter of little consequence, just another minor suggestion of the authors, human and divine. Confirmation of this call by other New Testament authors would confirm and add credence to the call for all faithful to prepare, to respond, and to do so in a Christian manner. While Luke's Acts furnishes us with plenty examples of Paul's apologetical activities, particularly to those with various types of authority in chapters 22–26, a confirmation of the Petrine call to apologetics in the Pauline epistles would be significant.

The well-educated Paul is far less to the point than Peter the fisherman. In his second letter to Timothy, his earlier companion, now the new bishop in Ephesus, Paul spreads what can be regarded as a similar call – in terms of the three elements – over several parts of his letter. Of preparation, the reader should

continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable

for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2Tim 3:14–17)

The call to engage can be recognised amongst the more general:

preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths. (2Tim 4:2–4)

In several of these verbs regarding communication, which can evoke thoughts primarily of evangelisation, there is a strong probability in such dialogue that responses regarding the faith being questioned or challenged would occur. And a Christian manner is called for in several places, most clearly in his ‘avoid disputing about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers’ (2Tim 2:14) and that ‘the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to every one, an apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponents with gentleness’ (2Tim 2:24–5). It can be argued that with Timothy the addressee, Paul considered such potentially apologetical activities as suitable for the overseer of the ecclesial community, for one in a position of authority, education, responsibility. However, it can be said that after having written many letters in his ministry, Paul knew that the content would be disseminated not only to the addressees but also to many others, and Second Timothy has no request that this text remain ‘for Timothy’s eyes only’, thus Paul can be considered as secondarily calling far more faithful to be apologetically active. Further, again with the Church canonising the letter, it should really be regarded as applicable to all faithful where appropriate.

Elsewhere, Paul makes a call that – without explicitly naming them – surely includes all faithful:

And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; so that we

may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ [...] (Eph 4:11–15)

After initially naming those with responsibility for what includes apologetically preparing the faithful (v. 11), he later refers to ‘we’ twice. The context of the ‘we’ strongly suggests all faithful, who will then be ‘speaking the truth in love’, which not only includes the Christian manner but also shows apologetics certainly to include building up each other in Christ.

One other notable apologetics source in the New Testament is the Letter of Jude, addressed to the faithful: ‘To those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ’ (v. 1). Some have faltering faith because of ‘ungodly people’ (v. 4) and the faithful should ‘contend for the faith’ (v. 3). Preparation is recognisable as ‘building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit’ (v. 20). Finally, Jude calls for them to ‘convince some, who doubt; save some, by snatching them out of the fire; on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh’ (Jude 22–3). The element of Christian manner is at best implicit in the text; however, the other two elements and the universal aspect are clear.

Therefore, it should be recognised that the call to apologetics was by the end of the Apostolic generation being developed. Coming after Philo’s development in the 50s of the Logos, and surely as part of the growing Greek influence in very early Christian thinking, the idea of speaking out – apo-logos – as a response was being taken from the legal sphere and being Christianised, especially by adding the third element of Christian manner, as a way of engaging others about the faith when questioned or challenged. Peter, Paul, and Jude, with Luke’s recording of many incidents also, show that being ready to respond to others and doing so in a Christian manner was important for all Christians, which is most clearly presented in the Petrine scriptural source.

3. Petrine Developments by the Apostolic Fathers

The Petrine call clearly recognises the obvious: a competent response cannot be made, never mind in a Christian manner – *veritas*, *caritas* – without at least sufficient preparation. This means that the

first step in following Peter's call is to prepare the faithful in having at least a basic understanding of the faith to enable those of all abilities to respond as best they can, with those of greater abilities answering those presenting more intellectual questions or challenges.

The fundamental understanding of the Christian faith beyond the existence of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the need to follow them is that there is good and evil. It was integral to the teachings of the Pentateuch, especially presented in Deuteronomy – the blessings and curses. It was the duality presented multiple times in the Psalms, Proverbs, the Wisdom literature in the Old Testament. And it was repeatedly presented by Jesus – sheep and goats, wedding guests and outsiders, those in the Kingdom and those otherwise, the user of talents and the one who hides them. This is the fundamental difference between following Jesus and not, being Christian and not. It is the Two Ways code and it was presented to the faithful repeatedly in the second generation of the Church, by the Apostolic Fathers. Clayton Jefford considers this to be a kind of pre-apologetics,⁵ which is preparation.

The *Didache* – the Teachings of the Apostles – presents a Two Ways code in its first six chapters out of 16.⁶ The *Letter of Barnabas* also presents a Two Ways code in its content,⁷ and the *Shepherd of Hermas* includes it in the aphorisms in its 12 mandates.⁸ Therefore, a significant amount of the content of documents of the very Early Church focuses on establishing and concretising the Two Ways in the understanding of the faithful.

The presentation of the Two Ways did not stop there. It is used in the *Rule of Benedict*, establishing Christianity amongst the 6th-century chaos as Rome was falling and a new order was being established.⁹ It was used after Lateran IV which decreed that all faithful attend the

⁵ Clayton N. Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers and the New Testament* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 88.

⁶ 'Didache' in Kirsopp Lake, *Apostolic Fathers* (London: 1912), <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-lake.html>.

⁷ Jefford describes the Two Ways content in *Barnabas* as being in chapters 18–19 (e.g., Lake, *Apostolic Fathers*, 55) but chapter 20 is clearly in the same manner, albeit the form is now 'the bad way is x, y, z; it is not a, b, c'. See 'Barnabas' in Lake, *Apostolic Fathers*, <https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/barnabas-lake.html>.

⁸ Jefford, *Apostolic Fathers*, 121. 'The Shepherd of Hermas,' trans. J. B. Lightfoot, *Early Christian Writings*, accessed April 12, 2023, <https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/shepherd-lightfoot.html>.

⁹ Benedict, *The Rule*, chapter 2, <https://christdesert.org/rule-of-st-benedict/chapter-2-qualities-of-the-abbot/>.

Sacrament of Confession annually as a minimum and the Two Ways code helped priests present a framework of what to confess to those without experience and understanding.¹⁰ And it is still presented today in Gospel readings regularly in churches everywhere.¹¹ It can thus be regarded as fundamental for Christians and a framework of which one should never lose sight.

Naturally, as a foundation, teaching the Two Ways code needs to develop into further areas of Christian understanding, thus preparation. *The Letter of Clement* as a response from the more established authority of Rome to the Church in Corinth in chaos shows developing pastoral content as well as firm guidance on how the faithful should act, that is, with continuity and trust in those appointed in authority, rather than following usurpers who have caused great problems. It is both applicable to that Church and also as a teaching document to others regarding the importance of unity and peace, and also orthodoxy.

Further developed are the letters of Ignatius of Antioch on his way to martyrdom in Rome. The seven letters keep returning to certain themes that are developed along his journey while also covering issues that are presumably pertinent to the particular Church. Repeating themes include unity with the bishop of one's particular Church and being wary of Docetism or Judaisers of the faith. Specific themes include, for example, mentioning to the Magnesians about Sunday being the new Christian holy day.¹² These are clearly responses to what Ignatius either perceived or are issues reported to him by representatives of the Churches. He is on one level apologetically responding to issues at an ecclesial level while providing content that can be presented to the faithful for the purpose of preparing them for presenting these ideas to others. Throughout the documents, a Christian manner of respect for others but more so for God and his teachings is evident.

Other texts could be named also, such as Polycarp's letter to the Philippians. Preparation is key to developing apologetics – the ability to respond effectively and appropriately when others question or

¹⁰ Cf. R. N. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c.1215–c.1515* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), <https://archive.org/details/religiondevotion0000swan/page/n7/mode/2up>, 27ff.

¹¹ For example, regularly in the final weeks of the three liturgical yearly cycles in the Sunday Gospel Readings in the Catholic Church.

¹² Ignatius, *Letter to the Magnesians* 10, in *Early Christian Writings*, revised trans. Andrew Louth (London: Penguin, 1987).

challenge the faith. The content is helpful as a response by Christian leaders to problems or areas needing improved understanding, and can then be used by others as a tool for teaching the faith, that is preparation of the faithful for apologetics, which is a means of removing obstacles for a better understanding of the faith. However, it should be recognised that the length of these texts corresponds generally with those found in the New Testament, which means they are accessible for those in pastoral and educational roles to pass the content on to the ordinary faithful.

4. New Apologetical Approaches and the Justinian Turn

A change in approach took place in the following generation, as distance developed between the Apostolic and current generations. The faithful were in some ways less in a state of flux, however, persecution continued and came increasingly from state and local authorities. The preparation element for the first time, according to extant sources, was being put into writing as a response. This meant apologetics – literally, on paper – was being adapted; of course, perceiving the extent of any verbal apologetics, and the nature of it, is well-nigh impossible, albeit one piece of evidence exists from the 170s.¹⁵ It is right that apologetics adapts to its best fit as it is a response but it is important that it never loses sight of the original Apostolic calls.

The apologia of Bishop Quadratus of Athens to the emperor visiting his city in 125 – because ‘unscrupulous persons were trying to get our people into trouble’¹⁴ – has been lost, albeit it was widely known still at the time of Eusebius,¹⁵ who quickly became in many ways the source for literature that survived the pre-Constantine persecutions,¹⁶ but his strong preference for intellectual content may have rendered this selective.¹⁷ However, we have another text presented at the same

¹⁵ Celsus’ lost writing, partially recorded in Origen’s later *Contra Celsum*, reported on what may have been apologetical activity, but his particularly polemical slant is not helpful in developing a real image. See especially Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 3.44 and 3.55, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04163.htm>.

¹⁴ Eusebius, *The History of the Church* (London: Penguin, 1989), 4.3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Historians in the succeeding years depended upon Eusebius as the source, as shown in ‘Early Church Historians,’ *Fourth Century Christianity*, February 18, 2017, <https://www.fourthcentury.com/early-church-historians/>.

¹⁷ Rebecca Denova, ‘Eusebius on Christianity,’ *World History Encyclopedia*, October 15, 2021, <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1854/eusebius-on-christianity/>.

time to Hadrian, being that of Aristides the Philosopher.¹⁸ It is the earliest extant actual apologia, that is, a text addressed not to the faithful for preparation but to another in order to explain, to defend Christianity so as to remove obstacles to understanding Christianity in some way – here, to show Christians as not problematic to authorities but rather as good citizens. Tellingly, Aristides returns to presenting a Two Ways style of approach with a development: Four Ways, which in reality is fundamentally Two. He presents the beliefs and behaviour of Barbarians, Greeks (including Egyptians), Jews, and Christians. His Christian manner is somewhat lacking, especially towards the Egyptians: ‘As the Egyptians, then, were more stupid than the rest of the nations, these and such like gods did not suffice for them. Nay, but they even apply the name of gods to animals in which there is no soul at all.’¹⁹ Neither did he restrain his criticism of Greek pagan beliefs, albeit refraining from such direct insults. His mention of the name of Jesus is brief at the beginning and the end. His argument rather was that Christians were excellent and trustworthy citizens – an early aesthetic apologetics.

There was an interesting text that may have provided a good example to the ordinary faithful on how to engage, but this can only be speculated upon, for it may have been more philosophical. However, the *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus* was lost. This is a debate between a Christian and a Jew, likely written around 140 by Aristo/Aristos/Ariston of Pella, who may have been either a Christian or a Jew close to Christian belief. In the text,

a Christian is described as conversing with a Jew on the subject of the Jewish Scriptures, and proving that the predictions regarding Christ fitly apply to Jesus; although the other disputant maintains the discussion in no ignoble style, and in a manner not unbecoming the character of a Jew.²⁰

The Christian explains how Jesus is the Christ, against reasoned arguments by the Jew. Origen later describes it as a popular text and Jerome also writes of it. The former indicates it to have been suitable ‘to strengthen the faith of the multitude of simple believers’ and that it

¹⁸ Aristides, *The Apology of Aristides the Philosopher*, trans. D. M. Kay, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/aristides-kay.html>.

¹⁹ Aristides, *Apology*, 12.

²⁰ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 4.52, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04164.htm>.

was ‘not adapted to impress those of more intelligent mind’,²¹ which means that it was accessible to many Christians, thus answering the universal aspect of the Petrine call. A fragment found in recent years sheds light on the accessibility of language and directness of content.²² This text more than any other of the period points to a more ordinary apologetics taking place:

the author’s reasoning appeared cumbersome and unskillful to Orthodox theologians of the fourth and fifth centuries and failed to inspire admiration for the doctrinal value of the Dialogue in late antiquity. But this lack of internal logic is an argument in favor of the high age of the text, a time in which Christian theology had not yet reached a firm shape.²³

This far more organic and ordinary apologetics points to how it developed as well as it being more accessible to far more ordinary faithful in its time, far more so than the next text for which it very likely provided a model.²⁴

The best known of what are called the Apologists, that is, those who wrote actual apologias – as opposed to those who verbally responded – is Justin Martyr. A Greek convert from a legal and philosophical background, who had journeyed through different schools such as Stoicism, Pythagoras, and Platonism, was drawn by the witness of the joy of Christians. Authentic, extant texts are his two apologias to authorities and his *Dialogue with Trypho* – significantly developed from Aristides and *Jason and Papiscus*. An examination of his work is beyond the scope here, and the focus is rather on whether he moved away from the elements and universal aspect of the Petrine call.

First, Justin is evidently well-prepared as his content clearly presents Christian ideas and explains – in direct defence as well as the dialogue – the faith. He uses his well-developed legal and philosophical skills in conjunction with his Christian learning and development. This, second, enabled him to respond, in the *Dialogue with Trypho*, which may have been based upon actual engagement with Rabbi Tryphon in

²¹ Ibid.

²² François Bovon and John M. Duffy, ‘A New Greek Fragment from Ariston of Pella’s “Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus,”’ *Harvard Theological Review* 105, no. 4 (October 2012): 462, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23327689?seq=4>.

²³ Ibid., 465.

²⁴ Ibid., 460.

the 130s in Ephesus,²⁵ as well as produce two lengthy apologies that undoubtedly respond to perceived issues in civil matters. And third, regarding Christian manner, Justin is the earliest surviving apologetical source that properly follows the third Petrine element. With earlier authors having focused more on preparation, this did not apply so much as the content was addressed to the faithful, albeit setting an example was important. The fledgling group of direct apologies that remain available to us, that is, only Aristides, offered content that was blunt and at times unpleasant to say the least towards some non-Christians. However, Justin had a philosophical background, followed by two decades as a Christian, which seems to have enabled him to appreciate the importance of displaying a good Christian manner. Although he may seem harsh at times with Trypho, he is not rude, according to Dulles, and they part on good terms.²⁶

However, it is in the aspect of a universal call that Justin's approach is not in accord with Peter's call. While Peter calls upon all faithful to be prepared, respond, and to do so in a Christian manner, Justin's intellectual background has him present texts that are not at all accessible to most faithful. While it is a strong development of the fragments we have of *Jason and Papiscus*, Justin raises the content to a level requiring an elite education. The texts are vast in size: there are 142 chapters in *Trypho* which are comparable in size generally to those in Scripture.²⁷ Its length is that of a specialist text or a significant compendium of theology. This renders it useful only for a specialist few, and certainly not in any way for all the faithful; such accessibility would have required re-presentation by specialists capable of teaching it to those with an ordinary or no education. Justin's *First Apology*, to Emperor Antoninus Pius, is briefer with only 68 shorter chapters, but this remains in the specialist area of apologetics when regarded in the light of the Petrine call. The *Second Apology* is significantly shorter while retaining the more challenging style.

²⁵ Jules Lebreton, 'St. Justin Martyr,' *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 8 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), accessed April 21, 2023, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08580c.htm>.

²⁶ Avery Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 32.

²⁷ *Trypho* has approximately 69 000 words and 375 000 characters, that is, just short of 210 standard pages, which is around 10 times longer than the Letter to the Hebrews – a useful scriptural text for apologetical preparation – which has approximately 7000 words and less than 40 000 characters.

Justin's new approach – elite, intellectual – was a niche area of apologetics. He took previous apologias and the content of other Christian texts, of various extents apologetical, and integrated these with his foundational legal-philosophical background to create highly specialised texts in terms of accessibility – in length and depth of content. In doing so, he returned the *apologia* to the legal and philosophical sphere from which Peter had fetched it a century before. Where Peter – the common fisherman – had universalised a specialist term as he Christianised it regarding both manner and 'commonising' it among the faithful, Justin placed it back into the elite legal context while retaining the Christian manner element. Therefore, this approach to apologetics was certainly faithful to the three Petrine elements but it was not in any way addressed to all faithful, as Peter had done, and it certainly was not accessible for the majority of Christians.

This is no condemnation in the slightest of Justin's content, nor a claim that all apologetics should be accessible to all. There must be room for all levels of ability, specialisation, interest, theme, and expertise within the very wide range imaginable of Peter's call to all faithful, and questions or challenges of higher intellectual levels, such as those of Celsus and a century later Porphyry, require appropriately intellectual responses. Apologetics, being a response, should adapt to the context and the content of those being responded to. However, any identification of apologetics as being based upon Justin's example would clearly be to the detriment to the idea of apologetics for all the faithful, and particularly to those unable to access such a specialisation. So it is very unfortunate that this Justinian narrowing is what subsequently happened in the main.

Of course, this is only a variation in method and focus, and intellectual questions and challenges require intellectual responses. Therefore, for this to be considered a Justinian turn, it is necessary for there to have been a continuation of the change, that is, a trend. What happened next was important for apologetics, and the later understanding of its developments.

5. Post-Justin Developments – Petrine or Justinian?

What may have seemed initially as good practice – leaders and experts showing the way to develop apologetics as a means of engaging with secular authorities – meant a significant change in focus for

apologetics. With the exception of Irenaeus, subsequent extant texts show apologetics to have taken a turn to the intellectual, elite, and in time clerical, leaving behind the universal call for all faithful to prepare, to respond, in a Christian manner.

Tertullian, also a lawyer, is known well for his aggressive style, strict approach, and thus was lacking in Christian manner; another legalist, Minucius Felix was on the other hand dove-like but he mostly omitted Christ from his content – perhaps poor preparation, or just a lack of Christ-based response; the *Letter to Diognetus* was shorter but retained a requirement for having had a good education to follow it, albeit it was not so dense as others; Clement continued the philosophical approach while living up to his name; and Origen was lengthy and philosophical. Of interest here, Origen in his mid-third century response to Celsus,²⁸ does not defend the ordinary faithful in their lower quality apologetical attempts so excoriated by Celsus, which would have indicated attempts to prepare them for apologetical responses. Instead, he points out that sharing many of the Christian teachings with the faithful depends on whether it is to ‘intelligent hearers’ or ‘simpler minds’;²⁹ that ‘wherever (our instructors) see [various uncouth groups] they bring publicly forward divine and venerable truths’ with no mention of general faithful but of specialists,³⁰ and then likens such instruction to philosophers teaching rather than the general faithful sharing their faith,³¹ all of which indicate the ordinary faithful not being apologetically prepared or particularly apologetically active by Origen’s time.

Later, Eusebius was a pivot between the persecuted Church and the legal Church in temporal terms, but not only did he focus on particularly intellectual figures,³² most probably using them to seemingly conceal a lack of original content on his part,³³ but there was also the issue of his endorsement of Arianism. Then there was the important bulwark of orthodoxy, Athanasius, whose writings were more dry and less accessible to the ordinary faithful; John Chrysostom was able to speak to the crowds but he did not have Christian manner as

²⁸ See footnote 13.

²⁹ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 3:52.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 3:53.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 3:54.

³² Texts available in his library are listed in Andrew James Carriker, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 299–311.

³³ Andrew Louth in Eusebius, *History*, Introduction, xiii and xxv.

a priority;⁵⁴ and then there was Augustine who reinforced the clericalisation of apologetics by forming a community of priests around him in the see of Hippo, who then in turn mostly became episcopal figures themselves.⁵⁵

The only one, again a bishop, to have somewhat bucked the intellectualising trend, to address the ordinary faithful with his apologetics, was Irenaeus of Lyons, and this was before the Justinian trend had become established. Irenaeus returned from a Roman winter around 180 to find he was now the only priest of the local Church where most faithful had been martyred, and on becoming the bishop he clearly focused on protecting his flock as is clear in the earlier parts of his writings at least. This included educating them against the prevailing Gnostic heresies, teaching them enough of the content of such beliefs to identify them, and also why they were problematic. This enabled them to explain to others the difference between orthodoxy and heresy, and his writings developed into the five books of *Against the Heretics*. Without doubt, it is not only a valuable text for understanding the problematic nature of such beliefs but it also even developed into the first systematic theology. However, this approach, consistent with the preparation element of apologetics for all the faithful, certainly at different levels of understanding, was not emulated by subsequent extant apologetical writers.

Avery Dulles clearly understands apologetics through this more rigid lens as being intellectual, philosophical, formal. In his for-the-most-part excellent and very helpful *A History of Apologetics*, he states that '[t]he writings of the Apostolic Fathers [...] did not themselves engage in what one should call apologetics.'⁵⁶ He only recognises Quadratus, Aristides, and the fragments of the *Preaching of Peter* as apologetical before Justin. And for some inexplicable reason, he entirely omits Irenaeus from his *History*. Therefore, it can be seen that not only did Justin influence apologetics in his own time but throughout Christian history since, with the later embedding of apologetics within the elite, intellectual university system from the High Middle Ages.

⁵⁴ Dulles notes this in Dulles, *History*, 69–70. It can be seen, for example, in John Chrysostom, *Against the Jews*, 3, https://tertullian.org/fathers/chrysostom_adversus_judaeos_03_homily3.htm.

⁵⁵ Cf. Eugène Portalié, 'Life of St. Augustine of Hippo,' *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02084a.htm>.

⁵⁶ Dulles, *History*, 27.

How did this trend develop and why did the intellectualisation and clericalisation of apologetics come about? The content of apologetics is cyclical: preparation is at least partly made up by taking in the response of previous apologists – as example, model, and as learning the content. When there is a trend developing, without there being a counter-trend, it is possible for that trend to become established, thus pulling subsequent content away from a balanced approach. By placing such a bias on subsequent content, without a correction, the identity and even definition of the whole becomes skewed from the original, whether in a narrowing or an altering in understanding. Over time, without a balancing force – here a different type of apologetical approach, or a return to the original sources – the turn becomes the norm, and the area, field, concept loses touch with the original identity, and thus possibly even the purpose and rationale to some extent.

And so, in time, apologetics became Justinian in nature and identity, the Petrine original apologetics lost its universal aspect, and the Christian manner was lessened in emphasis. It became an academic field for intellectuals and clerics – often the same thing historically. Its purpose was to show Christianity as credible through being rational, intellectually robust. And this separated it from the universal aspect of the original apologetics calls and practice.

But this was not to remain the case. It was only in the early twentieth century that an organic movement of more popular apologetics appeared in the English-speaking world: amongst a number of others, for example, Frank Sheed's

genius was to employ simplicity as a gateway to crystalline clarity. He disdained jargon and arcane philosophical references that do nothing to help the questioning reader. Instead, he used plain English to reveal to the ordinary man and woman the richness of Catholicism.⁵⁷

Other such as C. S. Lewis, G. K. Chesterton, Fulton Sheen, and many more brought apologetical understanding to interested ordinary faithful. From both academic and more ordinary backgrounds, and certainly benefiting to various extents from Justinian intellectual apologetical

⁵⁷ Charles Lewis, 'The Writings of Frank Sheed: Here Comes Theology for Everyone,' *National Catholic Register*, August 1, 2020, <https://www.ncregister.com/features/the-writings-of-frank-sheed-here-comes-theology-for-everyone>.

understanding, they were able to present a far more approachable apologetics content to far more faithful and also to those outside the faith.

Then the Second Vatican Council called for a return to original apologetics in many ways.⁵⁸ This act of ressourcement is clearest in two distinct calls. *Lumen Gentium* (LG) 10 states that: ‘Everywhere on earth [all disciples of Christ] must bear witness to Christ and give an answer to those who seek an account of that hope of eternal life which is in them.(105)’. Endnote 105 reads ‘Cf 1 Pt. 3:15’. The term ‘bear witness’ includes having a Christian manner – the third element. A stronger call can be found in *Dignitatis Humanae* (DH) 14:

The disciple has a grave obligation to Christ, his Master, to grow daily in his knowledge of the truth he has received from him, to be faithful in announcing it, and vigorous in defending it without having recourse to methods which are contrary to the spirit of the Gospel.

In both texts, the reference to ‘disciple’ should be understood as all who follow and learn from Christ, that is, a Christian, which is also understandable as preparation. The calls in LG 10 and DH 14 are not alone as related content and other calls can be found in other Council documents.⁵⁹ It is telling that the Council Fathers, however, did not use the term ‘apologetics’ as it had become, especially in Europe, identified with clerical authority and overly-intellectual argument, feasibly being developments of the Justinian turn that over time increasingly distanced the ordinary faithful from participating in apologetical preparation and activity. The Church has since then not been silent on apologetics. For example, using a Petrine understanding of the nature of apologetics, the popes can be recognised to have spoken about or called for apologetical developments more or less explicitly,⁴⁰ each being at least somewhat

⁵⁸ Stuart Nicolson, ‘Original Apologetics,’ 9–11.

⁵⁹ For example, *Gravissimum Educationis* 2 and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 31. All Vatican II documents can be found from the contents page at https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm.

⁴⁰ Except John Paul I, for example: Paul VI, ‘Ecclesiam Suam,’ *The Holy See*, August 6, 1964, 63, 90, 107, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam.html; John Paul II, ‘Veritatis Splendor,’ *The Holy See*, August 6, 1993, 109, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html, which cites 1 Pt 3:15; Benedict XVI, ‘Caritas in Veritate,’ *The Holy See*, June 29, 2009, 1, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben

more applicable to apologetics for ordinary faithful than being at the pre-conciliar norm of a higher intellectual level.

Apologetics had lost its pastoral identity and a new understanding of the identity of apologetics was needed. Therefore, only by returning to the original understanding of apologetics, as per the Petrine call, can apologetics be understood as pertaining to all faithful, who need to be prepared so they can respond when questioned or challenged about the faith, and to do so in a Christian manner.

Conclusion

Original apologetics, which can be encapsulated as Petrine apologetics, stems from the Apostolic generation and is supported also by Paul and Jude, as well as how an understanding of the faith was considered as important by the Apostolic Fathers. Recognisable as having three elements – preparation, response, in a Christian manner – and being for all Christians as integral in their faith life, it is evident in many extant Early Church documents in different ways, especially with a focus on preparing the faithful using the Two Ways foundational thinking and pastoral apologetics.

Developing the newer approaches of dialogue and apologias to those outside the faith, Justin Martyr offered a far more significantly intellectualised apologetics, which was inaccessible to many of the faithful. This valid development in a niche and narrow way, however, developed into a trend that became established as the norm, with especially Eusebius filtering out any texts deemed to be of a lower quality, and Augustine particularly contributing to the clericalising trend that developed with apologetics. The ordinary faithful became distanced from learning how to explain their faith to others, and doing so appropriately. This trend continued in the Mediaeval period, especially through the new university system.

However, there was an organic development of more ordinary apologetics in the English-speaking sphere around the turn of the twentieth century. This continued and, in the middle of the century, the Second Vatican Council – which does not mention ‘apologetics’

-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html; Francis, ‘Evangelii Gaudium,’ *The Holy See*, November 24, 2013, 132, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

explicitly – included two distinct ressourcement calls to all faithful that include all three elements of original apologetics as found in the Petrine call. In this distinguishing of Justinian apologetics – remarkable for its absence in the documents – from Petrine apologetics, it is clear that the Church called for a return to original apologetics at Vatican II.

*Faculty of Theology
University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice
Kněžská 8
370 01 České Budějovice
Czech Republic
E-mail: snicolson@tf.jcu.cz*